



Protocol Components

The components of a trafficking protocol should include staff training and supports, screening and care coordination procedures, mandatory reporting, multidisciplinary response, follow-up or follow-through procedures, and continuous quality improvement.



What is a protocol?

A protocol guides staff on how to identify and respond to trafficking.

1. Staff Training and Supports

All staff in an organization, including leadership, administrative, and supportive staff, should be trained on what trafficking is—and isn't. Many myths and misconceptions are associated with trafficking, often perpetuated by media. Unless all staff are educated, individuals who are experiencing trafficking can and will be missed.

Where can you find training?

OTIP's National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center offers free training and technical assistance, both in person and online. Look for training opportunities in your community, including training on working with populations at an increased risk, such as migrant workers, youth who are experiencing homelessness, or survivors of other crimes.

2–4. Screening and Care Coordination Procedures

Screening tools for people who may have experienced trafficking should focus on collecting information about the individual's emergency, medium-, and long-term needs. In addition to the screening tool, organizations need to have a plan in place that considers screening procedures and how to plan for safety. Your community-based advocacy organizations can play a vital role in helping you develop and implement each of these components and likely have access to those with lived experience who are interested in supporting your work.

When developing screening and care coordination procedures, remember the following:

- ☐ Know what you can and cannot disclose.
- ☐ Breaches of privacy create distrust and may result in legal action.
- ☐ Build rapport, trust, and a sense of safety by explaining the limits of confidentiality and obtaining consent.
- ☐ Establish MOUs with external partners that include limitations of HIPAA, individual consent for information sharing, and data sharing agreements.

Ensure your response protocol addresses the following:

Screening and Identification

- ☐ Who will be the designated interviewer and if an interpreter is needed
- ☐ The tool or approach that will be used
- ☐ How to ask trauma-informed and culturally responsive questions
- ☐ Which interpreters will be used and how to contact them

Interview Procedures

- ☐ How to safely and effectively have a private conversation with the individual
- ☐ How to ask trauma-informed and culturally responsive questions
- ☐ When mandatory reporting is required by law and steps to take
- ☐ Referral process to community support and resources

Safety Planning

- ☐ What will occur if you are unable to have a private conversation with the individual and suspect they are accompanied by their trafficker?
- ☐ How should you respond when you reach a level of certainty that an individual is experiencing trafficking but they refuse any intervention?

For more information on developing response protocols to help you plan for the safety of yourself and the individual, as well as some examples, see [HEAL's Protocol Assistance resources](#) and pages 12–14 of NHTTAC's [Adult Human Trafficking Screening Tool and Guide](#). To see a sample clinical policy and procedure from CommonSpirit Population Health, [click here](#).

5. Mandatory Reporting

Federal, state, tribal, and local laws addressing child abuse and domestic violence may require you to disclose that information to the proper authorities. Ensure your protocol outlines the steps your staff need to take to ensure compliance and understand how to communicate with external partners or law enforcement, when applicable.

For more specific information about mandatory reporting, see the separate handout on Mandatory Reporting and HIPAA Compliance.

6. Multidisciplinary Response

Look beyond the resources and staff available in your organization to collaborate across sectors. Consider the following partners:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare | <input type="checkbox"/> Survivors | <input type="checkbox"/> Social services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal aid | <input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement | <input type="checkbox"/> Public health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community-based organizations | <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral health | <input type="checkbox"/> School-based professionals |

For more detailed information, please see the Multidisciplinary Treatment and Response handout.

7. Follow-Up or Follow-Through Procedures

Ensure your protocol includes how staff should follow up and/or follow through with individuals:

- ☐ Establish trust and receive buy-in from the individual by including them in any decisions related to their care, both when creating a safety plan and identifying services.
- ☐ Engage the individual at every step of the follow-up process.
- ☐ Use a warm handoff when connecting the individual to another provider.
- ☐ Maintain a high level of confidentiality, and share only what is required for care coordination.
- ☐ Include the individual in the development of their after-care plan.

8. Continuous Quality Improvement

When applying a public health approach to human trafficking, a process of continuous quality improvement is vital to inform and measure the impact of your programs and interventions on those you serve, as well as your staff. One model of continuous quality improvement that you can use as an example as you implement new policies and procedures includes four steps: plan, do, study, and act.

Step 1: Plan—Plan the test or observation, including a plan for collecting data.

Step 2: Do—Try out the test on a small scale.

Step 3: Study—Set aside time to analyze the data and study the results.

Step 4: Act—Refine the change, based on what was learned from the test.



As a team, ask yourselves:

- ☐ What data are you currently collecting to monitor performance, and why do you collect that specific data?
- ☐ What does program improvement look like for your organization? How do you define progress?
- ☐ What data could you collect that you may not have considered before that would indicate improvement and progress toward your goals?
- ☐ How do you want to define program improvement as an organization?
- ☐ What are the short- and long-term measurable indicators you want to use to measure program improvement?
- ☐ What tools will allow you to measure those indicators over time?
- ☐ What are your documentation procedures?
- ☐ How can you use ICD-10 codes, if applicable, to document and track patients affected by trafficking?

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